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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 005900

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TAGS: [PREL PHUM IS LE GOI EXTERNAL ISRAELI PALESTINIAN AFFAIRS](#)

SUBJECT: NEA DAS DIBBLE'S 9/21 MEETING WITH MFA HEAD OF UN
DIVISION ABOUT ISRAEL'S RECENT UN ACTIVITIES

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR NORMAN OLSEN, FOR REASONS 1.4(B AND D).

SUMMARY

1. (C) MFA Deputy Director General and Head of the UN and International Organizations Division Aharon Leshno Yaar told NEA Deputy Assistant Secretary Elizabeth Dibble September 21 that the GOI plans to ignore Palestinian efforts to prevent adoption of a new symbol of the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) that would allow inclusion of the red star of David, and asked the USG to urge the Swiss to do the same. He also requested that the USG encourage the Swiss to hold a conference on the symbol now, while the political climate is conducive to progressing toward its adoption. Yaar noted that FM Silvan Shalom does not currently speak to Palestinian leaders, and said he has pressed Shalom to begin doing so. Yaar reported that he himself plans to start talking to Marwan Jilani, the Palestinian assistant foreign minister for multilateral relations. GOI relations with UNRWA have improved, Yaar said, while UNIFIL remains a problem for the Israelis. Finally, Yaar described positive progress on the adoption of a Holocaust Remembrance Resolution in the UN General Assembly (UNGA). END SUMMARY.

Al-Kidwa's Opposition to red star of David

2. (C) Yaar said that Palestinian Foreign Minister Nasser Al-Kidwa has adopted a hard line against Israeli ICRC membership and ICRC adoption of a new symbol that would allow incorporation of the red star of David. Yaar said Al-Kidwa is currently employing "every means to obstruct efforts" to recognize the Jewish emblem, as he is "desperate for achievements, since he cannot produce results for the Palestinians in the UN." Yaar said Al-Kidwa told the Swiss he intends to mobilize Arabs, Muslims, and non-aligned nations to oppose adoption of the emblem. According to Yaar, the best way to handle Al-Kidwa is to "ignore him." The Swiss, he said, have a tendency to listen to Al-Kidwa and then ask for Israeli concessions. Yaar cautioned that if the Swiss respond in this manner they will only precipitate Palestinian demands for further concessions.

3. (C) Yaar requested that the USG encourage the Swiss Government to ignore Al-Kidwa. The post-disengagement period, Yaar argued, offers a rare opportunity for progress in adopting the new symbol. "If this is not the best time," he intoned, "then when is?" Yaar suggested that "the Swiss plan a conference on the issue." If the political climate changes, he said, then the conference can be canceled at a later date.

Encouraging FM Shalom to Speak to the Palestinians

4. (C) According to Yaar, FM Shalom currently has no direct contact with the Palestinians. Yaar has thus helped prepare an "action plan" that, among other tactics, encourages FM Shalom to speak to the Palestinians and to deal with Gaza as if it were a new Palestinian state. Yaar said he had received FM Shalom's "green light" to speak to Marwan Jilani and has asked UN Middle East Envoy Alvaro de Soto to facilitate this contact.

GOI Relations with UNRWA and UNIFIL

5. (C) Yaar reported that relations have improved between the GOI and UNRWA. He said he personally likes Karen Koning Abu Zayd, commissioner-general of UNRWA. He mentioned, however, a recent disagreement between the GOI and Abu Zayd about UNRWA devotion of an entire annual report chapter to discussing the subsequently disproved Israeli accusation that Palestinians had used UNRWA ambulances to transport Qassam rockets. Yaar explained that Abu Zayd was upset that the Israelis communicated their opposition to inclusion of this chapter in the report

directly to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. In the end, Yaar said, Abu Zayd agreed to remove the chapter from the report.

16. (C) Yaar also said that the GOI and USG should reconsider UNRWA's long-term role in the Gaza Strip now that the Palestinians govern there. He acknowledged UNRWA as an enduring symbol for Palestinians of their refugee status, but said he believes the GOI and USG should jointly conduct a study on the future role of UNRWA in Gaza. Such a study, he warned, would require sensitivity and should not be made public. He insisted that the study would be done "with UNRWA, not against it." He said he has proposed this study to PRM Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Richard Greene.

17. (C) With regard to Lebanon, Yaar emphasized that Israel will not allow Hizballah to take refuge behind UNIFIL. The GOI, he said, seeks to "fix the UNIFIL situation," while taking into account American and French interests and the vulnerability of the new Lebanese government. Yaar said the GOI will present its ideas on this issue to the USG before the end of this year and the January 31 renewal of UNIFIL's mandate by the UN Security Council.

The Holocaust Remembrance Resolution

18. (C) Yaar also discussed progress in the UNGA on the Holocaust Remembrance Resolution. He said the next challenge is to acquire as many co-sponsors as possible for the resolution. With a strong body of co-sponsors, Yaar explained, the "Arabs and Muslims cannot kill it." He said 70 states already support the idea of the resolution, including several Muslim and non-aligned countries. China supports it, he added, and Russia is a co-author of the resolution.

19. (U) This cable has been cleared by NEA DAS Dibble.

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JONES